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WILLFUL LOTTIE;

OR,

WHAT WILL SHE DO NEXT!

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

> She is active, stirring, all fire,
> Cannot rest, cannot tire,
> o a stone she had given life.
>
> BROWNING.

Lottie Merrill was on her way from her widowed mother's rural home near Baltimore, to visit her father's sister in New York, and see if, perchance, a rich but offended old uncle, named Hiram Watson, might not cross her path.

Nothing of much importance transpired to interest her particularly, until she had changed cars; and was *en route* for Philadelphia.

This train chanced to be very much crowded. For several miles she had shared the seat with an old lady, whose rotundity was of such dimensions, as made it necessary for Lottie to make herself very comfortable in about one-fourth of the seat. However, to her great satisfaction, the old lady took her departure at one of the way stations. But just as she had smoothed out her skirts, and began to feel the luxury of breathing space, she was aroused by a soft, pleasant voice saying:

"Will you allow me to share your seat?"

Looking up, she beheld a tall, graceful gentleman, with large brilliant dark eyes, and soft black hair, pushed back from the full, high forehead, just her idea of a handsome man.

With a pleasant little bow she made room for him.

Many were the polite attentions he offered her in the way of papers, books, and information relative to the various stopping places. These she received rather coldly, remembering her brother Joe's advice to "beware of sharpers."

Surely this splendid looking fellow must be a gentleman, she thought. How she wished she knew if he was honest, so she could hear and talk to him. She wished Joe had kept his advice, and left her to follow her own inclination. When however, she found out that he was going to New York, and resided there, she was proof no longer against his continued attempts at conversation. She told him where she was going, and the name of her relatives, and was much reassured, when the suspected individual told her that he had been to college with her cousin Julian; had frequently met the young ladies at parties, and had on one occasion, (the last New Year's day), called at the house, and should in the future, with her permission, be a frequent visitor. It was all right then; she could, and did trust him, and was sorry enough, when they arrived at Jersey City, and were met by Julian Tracy, who formally presented his friend, Doctor Worth.

Placing her in the carriage waiting, while Julian looked after her baggage, Dr. Worth told her he should take an early opportunity of calling, and expressed the hope that this accidental acquaintance should be of lasting and pleasant continnance. Thanking Julian for the invitation to come soon, and pressing the hand of Lottie, he took his departure.

We shall pass over the meeting with her aunt and cousins, only saying that Mrs. Tracy was well pleased with Lottie's appearance, saying to her elder daughter:

"She is not at all stylish or showy, but piquant and decidedly taking. She will be sure to make an impression on her debut."

And so it proved. This new star in the firmament of fashionable society, quite dazzled the eyes, and turned the heads of most of the elegible young men, and indeed, her very pretty face, combined with her simplicity, the total absence of anything like Art, her confiding, child-like manner, won for her the admiration of the papa's, all of whom were willing, indeed anxious to welcome her as a daughter; should his boy be the favored one.

Lottie, to the great dissatisfaction of her aunt, would do as she would.

The principal cause of complaint was her entire disregard of the most devoted and continued attentions of young Percival Fitzhugh. He being the most desirable catch in the city; the only son and heir of a wealthy banker, who, rumor said, had declared his intention of turning over to his young hopeful the comfortable sum of a million to commence married life with. Be this as it might, Mrs. Tracy having angled in vain for him, in behalf of her daughter, welcomed the prospect of having him in the family some how.

She could keep quiet no longer, and proceeded to remonstrate with Lottie.

"I am astonished at you child! Are you going to throw away the chance that most all the girls would gladly seize? Young Fitzhugh is very much pleased with you. Just think of the splendid establishment he would place you at the head of," she said.

"Can't help it, auntie. I don't like Fitz. I am very sorry if he has any idea of offering such inducements to me. But I really think you are mistaken. He is in love only with himself," replied Lottie.

"It is of no use suggesting such brilliant prospects to Lottie, ma; for it is very plain to see to whom her heart is turning, if not entirely gone. Dr. Worth is the favored one. I admire your taste, little cousin; the doctor is a splendid fellow. I should likely enough have felt my heart in danger long ago, if it had not been guarded by two strong barriers: one being the fact of his unmistakable devotion to yourself; showing plainly how hopeless my case would be. The other quite as formidable. He is too poor to even think of marrying. He has nothing in the world but his profession, and has a widowed mother to support. It seems too hard that Fortune should have treated so shabbily one on whom Nature had bestowed so bountifully her good gifts," said May Tracy.

Lottie, humming a merry air, tripped lightly out of the room, deigning no reply. I think she dared not venture on this subject for fear of revealing what was hidden in the deepest recesses of her heart; the secure possession of which she no longer held. It was fluttering like a frightened bird, doubting, waiting only to be wooed to fly and find a haven in the bosom of young Richmond Worth.

"Joe's words were prophetic. But not in the light he meant," she whispered smilingly to herself. "I believe I was trapped and robbed in the railway cars; but to save me I cannot regret it."

Lottie had been with her aunt about a month, when a very remarkable event took place, which much affected her future welfare. But I must not anticipate.

Her cousins May and Florence had made an engagement for her to sit for a picture at a celebrated photograph gallery.

The day was beautifully clear and bright—but bitterly cold. Lottie declared she would not go if they ordered the carriage.

"It was too hard on the poor horses, and the driver had a terrible cold besides. It was really useless, and she wanted to look at the pretty things on the way. If they got tired they could ride in the cars. She liked the fun of that too."

So she carried her way, and they departed, accompanied by their constant attendant, Mr. Fitzhugh.

Lunch was waiting for their return. At last they came.

"Where is Lottie?" was the universal question.

"Indeed, ma, Lottie is the most wilful and determined girl I ever saw, and does the strangest things. You might just as well try to stop wind blowing as to stop her when she makes up her mind to do anything," exclaimed May.

"Well, tell us where she is. I'll venture all my worldly goods that whatever she has done is good and kind—yes, and proper too," said Julian, who was very much attached to Lottie, in a cousinly way.

"I'll tell you what she did, and then you will see how proper it was. Where she is, we don't know.

"After we got through down town, Flory complained of being tired, and so we determined to ride home. Mr. Fitzhugh was going to engage a carriage, when Lottie insisted on going in the cars, and off she flew and jumped in one just passing. Of course we had to follow.

"The car was quite crowded, and when we had gone a few blocks, there came in an old man, miserably dressed, with a large carpet-bag. Up sprang Lottie, and putting her arms around him, placed him tenderly and comfortably in her seat. Mr. Fitzhugh made her take his, then.

"I was mortified enough. I was fearful the people might think he was something to us. We rode on, and I was beginning to feel a little more comfortable, when the car stopped and the old man was making his way out; judge of my horror and amazement when she whispered to me:

"'I will be on presently. I'm going to help this old gentleman a little way with his luggage. It is so slippery he might fall.'

"The last we saw of her, she was holding him up as he crossed the street.

"Now, Julian, what do you think of this proper behavior?"

"Why, May, there is nothing really wrong about it. Lottie is decidedly something different from the modern young ladies. Very impulsive, acting directly from the promptings of a pure, kind heart. The direct cause of her action to-day I think you may attribute to reverence and veneration," answered her brother.

"Here comes the truant now. Come, answer for yourself, little one. Here are grave complaints against you. You are charged with violating all the rules regulating the conduct, airs, and graces of town-bred ladies. We will have to send you back to the country, for we shall never be able to make a fine young lady of you," said Julian.

Lottie glanced quickly, saw the merry twinkle in the eye of her cousin, and understood him. Turning to her aunt she said:

"Aunty, I'm sorry if I have displeased you, but I do not regret an action of common humanity. I have sins enough to answer for, without adding one for willful neglect of an aged person. I've returned safely, and feel satisfied and happy."

"How far did you escort your protégé, Lottie, and how did he receive your attentions?" asked Flory.

"Not very far; he insisted on my leaving him, but I did not until I saw a pleasant-looking German boy, standing doing nothing; so I slipped fifty cents in his hand, and asked him to go home with the old gentleman and keep him from slipping down. He thanked me many times, asked my name, and where I lived; and when I bade him good-bye, he said, 'Heaven bless you, you are a good child, and I feel sure that this kind act will be remembered by you very pleasantly as long as you live. When you pray, ask that grace may be sent from above, to comfort and soften a lonely, hard-hearted old man. Good-bye! we may meet again,' and so I left him; and, indeed, I could hardly help crying, I felt so sorry for him. He is a gentleman, I know, for he talks so well."

Weeks passed on, and Lottie's visit was near its close. Rumor said (and it was generally believed) that Dr. Worth had won from Lottie the consent to be his. One young friend, wiser than others, had declared that she knew it to be a positive fact that Lottie had said she was too young to marry yet awhile, and could very well afford to wait until the doctor should be in circumstances to justify his marrying. How true this was, I cannot tell, but feel perfectly safe in asserting that there was a happy and perfect understanding between the two.

It was her last day. On the morrow, she was to bid adieu to her kind friends and loving relatives.

They were all loitering over the breakfast-table, when the servant brought Lottie a little note. Opening it, she read aloud:

"My good child, come to the old man you were kind to. The bearer has a carriage, and will wait for you.

"Let your cousin or some friend accompany you."

"This is very strange. You are not going, Lottie?" said May and Flory, simultaneously.

"Yes, she is, I see," said Julian, "and I will, with pleasure, go with her. There is something more in this than we can see."

They were soon on their way. After about a half-hour's ride, they stopped before a large, old-fashioned, gloomy-looking brick house. The driver opened the carriage-door, and said:

"Here is the place, sir."

Helping Lottie out and up the stone steps, Julian was about to raise the handle of the dusty knocker, when the door was suddenly opened by an old woman, who said:

"Come in, Miss. The master has been waiting for you."

Opening a door upon the first floor, she ushered them in.

Seated in a large easy chair, paler and thinner than when she last saw him, was the old man—Hiram Watson—for so it proved to be. Holding out his hand, he said:

"I knew you would come, my good child.

You are very like your mother was, at your age. Ah, I see you are looking surprised, but I knew your mother well. Can you remember ever hearing her speak of her Uncle Hiram?"

"Oh yes, often. Are you Uncle Hiram? I am so glad to know you!"

Springing, she pressed her lips to his withered brow, and seated herself at his feet, saying:

"Speak to Julian, my cousin, won't you, uncle?"

"Excuse me, sir—I was so engaged with this dear child, that I've been very negligent. I am glad to meet you. Be seated, sir."

Turning again to Lottie, he said:

"Providence ordained that I should meet you, Lottie, and feel the influence of your loving kindness. I have been quite sick since I last saw you, but with God's blessing and the kind attendance of the good doctor, I am much better now, and the doctor says I am able to travel a little. I want to go home with you, little one. I'm so lonesome, I want to finish my days with your mother. Do you think she will welcome me?"

"Yes, yes, uncle—she loves you, I know. She wanted I should try to find you, but——"

"But what, my dear?"

"I was afraid you would think I was fortune-hunting, so I would not try to find you," said she, blushing deeply.

"Well, my child, Heaven willed that you

should. Ah, here is my friend and doctor: my niece, Miss Merrill—Doctor Worth."

Richmond Worth was standing transfixed with wonder. Lottie and Julian were very much enjoying his surprise. At last, he recovered himself, and exclaimed:

"Why, Lottie, is it possible!"

"And I must say, why, Doctor, is it possible that you know my niece?" said Uncle Hiram.

"Yes, sir, I am fortunate in the possession of such a great pleasure," said the doctor, casting a look of pride and love towards Lottie.

"If I can read looks, I should say you knew each other well, and liked each other better. I am glad, very glad. I think I shall attempt match-making once more, and meet with a happier result this time. Doctor, this dear child's mother was my niece and adopted daughter. I brought her from Maryland, educated her, and wanted to marry her to my ward, but she chose differently. I have never seen her since. This little one has made it all right now. I am going home with her, and after a little while, if you should follow, and ask our consent, I think neither she nor I would say nay. And Uncle Hiram's wedding presents will be no mean dowry, but a worthy setting for so pure and valuable a gem as this," patting Lottie's head.

The charming look of gratitude, and the warmth with which the young doctor pressed his hand, was a sufficient answer for the old uncle.

Lottie's departure was postponed for a few days, and then, accompanied by her uncle, she returned to her country home. The welcome which greeted the old man was so earnest and loving, that he was fully satisfied that his remaining days would be very happy there.

With every month came young Worth, urging Lottie for a speedy union; and before another year had passed he came once more, bringing Julian, his mother and sisters. There was a quiet little wedding.

After the ceremony Uncle Hiram placed a packet in his niece's hand; which opening, she found a document putting her in the immediate possession of fifty thousand dollars.

Aunt Cloe, hearing this, left her kitchen, at the risk of burning her waffles, to dart into the parlor, and exclaim, to the amusement of all:

"Old Cloe's words nebber fails. Didn't I profecise that you'd ketch a husban' and a fortun'! What you dun say now?" and she made her exit amidst peals of laughter.

"I say it is better to be born 'lucky than rich,'" said Joe.

"I say Lottie was born *both*," said Julian. "Lucky, you will *all* admit; and also *rich*, in the possession of the truest, rarest qualities of a good, pure heart."

Lottie's and the doctor's example was followed by others.

Julian, to Lottie's great joy, wooed and won her dear friend, the elder Miss Bingham. May succeeded in catching young Fitzhugh; and Flory's bright eyes made such sad havoc on the heart of the young minister who presided at Lottie's wedding, that report says she is about to try and heal the wounds she inflicted.